

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - March 21, 2006

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in San Diego handed up a two-count indictment charging 19 individuals with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine; three of these individuals are also charged with carrying a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime.

Court documents allege that a group of individuals led by Jorge Arreola-Gomez distributed hundreds of pounds of methamphetamine in southern California and elsewhere. Among those charged with Arreola are two sisters, his wife, his mother, and two brothers-in-law. According to court documents, the defendants used numerous couriers to transport drugs domestically and across the U.S-Mexico border. Court documents further allege the defendants used multiple juveniles to sell or smuggle methamphetamine.

According to court documents, the investigation led to the seizure of over 140 pounds of methamphetamine, 20 pounds of pseudoephedrine (a nasal decongestant commonly used to manufacture

methamphetamine), over \$25,000 in currency, and one firearm. Court documents outline numerous seizures that resulted from the investigation, including:

- * approximately 75 pounds of methamphetamine on September 15, 2005, from Salvador Becerra in Chula Vista, California;

- * a loaded firearm from Manuel Omar Garcia-Cervantes on October 27, 2005, (according to court documents, the investigation determined at that time of this seizure Garcia, at Arreola's request, was en route to threaten or kidnap the wife of a drug dealer who failed to pay his outstanding debt);

- * approximately 16 pounds of methamphetamine on December 10, 2005, from Teresa Osuna-Alcala at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry;

- * approximately 20 pounds of pseudoephedrine on December 20, 2005, from a juvenile (court documents allege the juvenile was transporting the cold medication to Mexico so it could be manufactured into methamphetamine, then smuggled back into the United States);

- * approximately 8 pounds of methamphetamine on February 12, 2006, from a juvenile at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry;

- * approximately 14 pounds of methamphetamine on February 16, 2006, from Nancy Alvarez at the San Ysidro Port of Entry; and

- * approximately 20 pounds of methamphetamine on March 6, 2006 from Benedicta Arreola in Chula Vista, California.

United States Attorney Lam said, "This case reflects the way methamphetamine is tied into so many threats to society -- precursor chemicals, the corruption of juveniles, and the connection between methamphetamine and firearms."

DEA Special Agent in Charge John S. Fernandes said, "I cannot overstate the destructive nature of methamphetamine. We will continue to be relentless in our efforts against drug dealers who are bringing this poison into our neighborhoods."

U.S. Attorney Lam stated that this investigation was supported by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force ("OCDETF"). The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country's battle against major drug trafficking.

The defendants will next be in court before United States Magistrate Judge Ruben B. Brooks on March 22, 2006, at 9:00 a.m. for a detention hearing.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 06CR0590-H

Jorge Arreola-Gomez	Counts 1 & 2
Jesus Alberto Bastidas	
Benedicta Arreola	Counts 1 & 2
Armando Ramirez	
Ana Maria Gomez-Sosa	
Manuel Omar Garcia-Cervantes	Counts 1 & 2
Eva Adriana Mendoza-Hernandez	
Juan Raul Perez-Zamorano	
Maria Arreola	
Maria Hilda Vaughn	
Teresa Osuna-Alcala	
Olegario Rodriguez	
Severiano Rodriguez-Quinones	
Nancy Alvarez	
Lorenzo Barbosa-Hernandez	
Victor Corona	
Hector Contreras	
Ruben Orozco	
Juan Carlos Robles-Gonzalez	

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Number of Defendants: 19

Count 1: Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 846, 841

Penalties: Mandatory minimum 10 years in prison, maximum of life in prison and \$4 million fine

Count 2: Carrying a Firearm During and in Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c)

Penalties: Maximum of life in prison and \$250,000 fine

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Drug Enforcement Administration
National City Police Department
Chula Vista Police Department
United States Marshals Service
U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

An indictment itself is not evidence that the defendants committed the crimes charged. The defendants are presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.